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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2017  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: MUGHRABI GATE RAMP APPROVAL PROCESS MOVING FORWARD

REF: A. TEL AVIV 03593  
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 02584

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Jerusalem contacts confirmed to PolOff January 15 and 16 that plans to reconstruct a ramp leading to the Mughrabi Gate of the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount are moving through the approval process. Director of the Waqf Azzam al-Khatib said he wants a new ramp plan approved by Jordan, UNESCO and Israel. Advisor to Jerusalem's Mayor Elad Halevy said a compromise between Israel and Jordan is in the works and will smooth out the approval process. End summary.

JERUSALEM PLANNING COMMITTEE APPROVES MUGHRABI  
GATE PLANS, BEGINS PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD  
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[1](#)2. (C) Former Ir Amim Director Danny Seidemann confirmed to PolOff January 15 that the Jerusalem District Planning Committee gave initial approval to plans for a new ramp leading to the Mughrabi Gate of the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Seidemann said the plans were deposited for a 60-day public review period early January 2008, but the review period was not widely publicized. According to Seidemann, the new plan has a smaller footprint than the original one, but would require that the last remaining buildings of the Mughrabi neighborhood be demolished to expand the Western Wall Plaza, and would include Jewish prayer rooms among former Mamluke and Ottoman ruins. He expressed concern that these changes will impact the status quo of the holy sites just as permanent status negotiations, including on Jerusalem, are renewed. After the 60-day public review period, the Regional Planning and Construction Committee must approve the plans before construction begins.

WAQF: NEW RAMP PLANS MUST INCORPORATE JORDANIAN INPUT  
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[1](#)3. (C) Director of the Waqf Azzam al-Khatib told PolOff January 16 that the Waqf will accept a new ramp plan only if UNESCO, Jordan and Israel agree. The construction will directly affect Muslim holy sites, he said, so the design of the new ramp must include Muslim input. Al-Khatib said Jordan presented its own ramp plan to Israeli and UNESCO in a January 13 meeting, and he hopes Israel will take this input into consideration. He accused the Jerusalem Municipality, which approved the initial plan for public review, of representing right-wing Israeli interests on this issue, and he hopes the GoI will be more even-handed on final plans.

MUNICIPALITY BELIEVES COMPROMISE IS IN THE WORKS  
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[1](#)4. (C) Political Advisor to Jerusalem Mayor Elad Halevy told PolOff January 16 that Jordanian and Israeli representatives

met several times January 13-15 in a "positive" atmosphere. He said they agreed to compromise on the design of the new ramp, incorporating parts of both parties' plans. If they succeed at forming a mutually acceptable approach, he said, a new plan would be deposited for a new 60-day public review period.

WALLES